



Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* begins by addressing people who were being harassed because of professing faith in Muhammad (sws). In particular, the youth and the slaves were passing through very severe trials from their fathers and masters respectively during the course of revelation of this *sūrah*. Quite naturally, this situation had induced many questions in the minds of the weaklings regarding the veracity of the Qur’ān as well as the Prophet (sws). In the wake of this, a need arose to dispel these doubts forthwith so that the oppressed and the weak are encouraged. At the same time, those people needed to be admonished who had become open and forceful in their oppression by regarding the reprieve granted to them by God as their triumph.

In deference to the circumstances, the *sūrah* also has indications of migration of the Muslims from this area of oppression. The oppressed among them are guided not to feel defeated before injustice and oppression. If they have to leave their country for the cause of truth, they should be prepared for it. Neither is God’s earth devoid of safe havens nor is there any decrease in His treasure of provisions. God will show His mercy to people who migrate for His cause and will take care of all their needs.

In the previous *sūrah*, some indications are found of the opposition of the People of the Book. In this *sūrah*, their opposition is openly depicted. For this reason, Muslims are guided regarding the attitude they should adopt while dealing with the People of the Book.

Analysis of Discourse

Verses (1-7): It is pointed out that people who tread the path of the truth will necessarily be tried and tested. This is an established practice of God. It distinguishes a believer from a hypocrite. Yet people today who have been granted respite should bear in mind that they cannot escape from God’s grasp. Similarly, those who are today bearing injustice and oppression should remember that they will be rewarded much more than the troubles they are passing through for the cause of faith.

Verses (8-13): The bounds and limits of obedience to the parents and the elders are explained: they should be obeyed while remaining subservient to



God. Thus if the parents of some children demand that they be disobedient to God, then they should not comply with them. Before God, no one will be held responsible for the deeds of others. Every person will be answerable to Him for his own deeds.

Verses (14-40): The accounts of Noah (sws), Abraham (sws), Lot (sws), Madyan, the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, Qārūn, the Pharaoh, Hāmān are briefly referred to in order to historically corroborate what is mentioned in the introductory part of the *sūrah*:

- i. It is an established practice of the Almighty to test people who tread the path of the truth.
- ii. Relatives and relations have no importance with regard to rights and obligations. The greatest right is that of God.
- iii. Those who inflict God’s servants with trials and tribulations cannot escape His grasp.

Verses (41-45): A parable of the power and influence wielded by some who on the basis of external support had become God’s adversaries. It is stated that the parable of the schemes of such people is like that of the web of a spider. Nothing is more fragile and baseless than it. Their alleged deities and intercessors are also similarly baseless. This world is not a place of amusement and sport for children. It has been created with a purpose and with wisdom by the Almighty. This purpose and wisdom will one day manifest themselves. The Prophet (sws) is directed to read out the Book of God to people and be diligent in the prayer, disregarding all adversity. This prayer is a haven and sanctuary for the believers against all evils and calamities and is the real treasure of strength.

Verses (46-52): Some objections raised by the People of the Book on the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) are responded to. Muslims are guided on the style they should adopt while debating issues with them. Good People of the Book are praised. Those who are demanding a miracle are given an answer.

Verses (53-55): Those who were demanding from the Prophet (sws) to hasten the torment are responded to.

Verses (56-60): Muslims who were being harassed because of the crime of professing faith are directed to migrate and are given glad tidings of success in this world and the next.

Verses (61-69): This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. An argument is cited in favour of monotheism from established facts acknowledged by the idolaters. At the same time, they are rebuked that peace and prosperity they enjoy in this land is because of the Baytullāh; yet they are showing ingratitude to the favour of God and have become infatuated with self-made dols right in the House of God. The consequence of this ungrateful attitude

that will soon come before them is depicted. The believers – who were trying to spread the radiance of the truth in this pitch dark atmosphere – are given glad tidings of God’s help.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 أَلَمْ أَحْسِبِ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُمْتَرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿١﴾ وَكَفَدْنَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢﴾ أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣﴾ مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٤﴾ وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُنَّ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِنِّي مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَتُوبُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ وَلَئِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ أَوْ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلَنَحْمِلَ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَمَاهُمْ بِحَابِلِينَ مِنْ خَطِيئِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَيَحْمِلُنَّ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَثْقَالًا مَعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ وَلَيَسْئَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَابَا كَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

This is Alif Lām Mīm. Do people think that once they say: “We have accepted faith,” they will be left alone and not be tested? And We even tested those who lived before them. So, God will make distinct the truthful and also make distinct the liars. (1-3)

Do these people who are committing wrongs think that they will escape Our grasp? Very evil is the decision they are making. He who hopes to meet God should rest assured that the time appointed by God shall certainly come and He hears and knows all. And he who is striving in Our cause is striving for his own benefit. God is not dependent on the people of the world. And those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds, We shall brush away their sins from them and will reward them the best for their deeds. (4-7)

And We directed man to treat his parents kindly. And if they force you to associate something with Me of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. To Me will all of you return. So, whatever you have been doing I will inform you of it. And those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds, We shall admit them into the group of the righteous. (8-9)





And there are those among people who do claim that they have accepted faith but when they are afflicted with sorrow in the cause of God, they regard the sorrow inflicted on them by people to be similar to God's punishment. And if in some matter God's help manifests itself, they will say: "We are with you." Is God not aware of whatever is in the hearts of people? And God will make distinct the believers and also make distinct the hypocrites. (10-11)

And the disbelievers say to the believers: "Follow our ways; We will bear the burden of your sins. Whereas they will not bear any of their sins. They are absolute liars. And they will bear the burden of their own sins and some other burdens as well also besides their own sins. And they will be asked about the falsehoods they are concocting. (12-13)

Explanation

اَلَمْ اَحْسِبِ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْا اَنْ يَقُوْلُوْا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ ۚ

اَلَمْ is the name of this *sūrah*. Research on this has already been presented in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*.

Though the words اَلَمْ اَحْسِبِ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْا اَنْ يَقُوْلُوْا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ are general, but the reference is to people who had become worried in the trying circumstances of Makkah. Some people had entered the folds of Islam but they had no idea of its difficulties. They thought that since they have begun treading the path of virtue, they will get a smooth sailing and they will happily reach their destination. When these people were faced with horrible persecution from the disbelievers, they were jolted and shaken. And the way such raw-minded people are afflicted with doubts, their minds too became a warehouse of doubts. For example, they thought that if this is the path of God why is it so difficult? If it is God's Messenger who invites people to this path, why is professing faith such a life-threatening affair? They would contend that since they have taken up the task of spreading God's religion, then it is a service to this cause; so why are hindrances being faced by them. These questions show that these people were not aware of the path of truth and the dangers it poses and could easily be led to hypocrisy. In this *sūrah*, it is this ailment of the people which is addressed the foremost. It is stated that they have very wrongly understood that if they lay claim to faith, then merely on the basis of this claim they will be regarded as believers without putting them through trial.

1. This is Alif Lām Mīm. Do people think that once they say: "We have accepted faith," they will be left alone and not be tested?

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢﴾

In this verse, the Almighty has very emphatically reminded people of an established practice of His regarding those who claim to have accepted faith: the way such people who lived before them were put into trials, they too will face trials. This is a reference to the previous messengers and those who had professed faith in them. The words *فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ* refer to the fact that if this trial does not take place, then how will it be proven that they are truthful in their claim. Thus God necessarily distinguishes the righteous from the wrongdoers. The word *علم* here means “to distinguish,” “to make distinct.” Research on this aspect of the word has already been presented at another place of this exegesis. Another point to be noted is that the word *علم* is used in its intensive form. The implication is that this is an established practice of God; hence whether people like it or not, they will have to pass through this test.

As far as the knowledge of God is concerned, it is all embracing: He is aware of the inner personality of each individual whether he is sincere or a hypocrite. Yet He does not punish or reward people merely on the basis of His knowledge; He does so on the basis of the deeds of people. For this reason, He tests each person by putting him into trials and it is through these trials that the status of each person is determined.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا ۚ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

After warning those who were laying claims to faith, this verse warns people who were persecuting weak Muslims. They are told that if they think that they will be left unchecked to carry out this persecution and never be seized by God, then they are totally wrong. Though the expression *يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ* has a general connotation, it actually refers to the wicked people who were persecuting Muslims, and were day by day getting more oppressive because of the respite they were being given by God. It is stated that if these people are under the misconception that God will grant them a further grace period, then they are very wrong.

The words *سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ* imply that they have passed a very mistaken judgement about God. If they think that God is so weak as to not able to seize them, then this is an entirely incorrect judgement. And if they think that God

2. And We even tested those who lived before them. So, God will make distinct the truthful and also make distinct the liars.

3. Do those people who are committing wrongs think that they will escape Our grasp? Very evil is the decision they are making.



is unconcerned about their oppression and injustice, then too they have reached a very wrong conclusion.

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

This verse sounds an assurance to the oppressed Muslims that come what may they have to do every deed while giving due regard to the Hereafter. If they have adopted this attitude, they should rest assured that the time for its arrival is prescribed. One day, they will meet their Lord and on that day, they will be rewarded for their hard work as well as for the trials endured for the cause of God. God hears and knows all. Nothing is beyond His knowledge. He is fully aware of their sacrifices and also cognizant of the reign of terror let loose by their enemies.

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥﴾

This verse states that a person who accepts faith and endures trials for its cause should remember that he is only brightening his own future. He is not doing any favour to God or His religion. So anxiety should not overcome him if some calamity befalls him. If this happens, then God does not need anyone. He is self-sufficient. It is the people who need Him. So if they offer the greatest of sacrifices for the cause of God, they are in fact making their own selves benefit from this. God receives no benefit. Here it needs to be fully kept in mind that like worldly deeds, religious deeds of a person too are beneficial to God. They are beneficial for the people themselves. God has prescribed this path for the well-being of the people. Just as when a farmer works hard to plough his fields, he in fact works hard for his own self and not for anyone else, in a similar way, when a person treads the path of religion he alone is to gain and not God.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦﴾

It is evidence from the placement and context that the word سَيِّئَاتِ refers to minor sins. It is stated that the Almighty will forgive the minor sins of every person who has accepted faith and done righteous deeds. He will moreover

4. He who hopes to meet God should rest assured that the time appointed by God shall certainly come and He hears and knows all.

5. And he who is striving in Our cause is striving for his own benefit. God is not dependent on the people of the world.

6. And those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds, We shall brush away their sins from them and will reward them the best for their deeds.

reward them abundantly for these deeds. The implication is that why should a person think that he has done a favour to God and His religion if he has endured some trial when the case is that God will reward them for all their deeds, whether small or big.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا ۖ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ۖ إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَنْتَبِئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

A greater part of the trials which the previous verses mention relates to the tough times the newly converted youth would face from their fathers and guardians who were disbelievers. Since the rights of the parents have always been acknowledged in all religions, at times, fathers have taken wrong advantage of them too: they would stop their children from fulfilling the rights of God by claiming that this is their right, and in this effort they have not even refrained from oppression and coercion. One can see examples of this attitude in the history of many righteous people. The details of what happened to Abraham (sws) at the hands of his father have been mentioned in the explanation of the previous *sūrahs*. The ordeal faced by youngsters in the time of Moses (sws) has also been cited in these *sūrahs*. A similar situation was faced by the youth who professed faith in Muhammad (sws). They too became a target of oppression from their fathers and guardians for the crime of accepting Islam. This situation entailed that such youth be given clear guidance regarding the attitude they should adopt if their parents interfere in the matters of their religion. The verse states that God has enjoined upon human beings to treat their parents kindly. At the same time, it counsels them that if they force them to associate partners with God without any reason, then they should not obey them. The word *توصية* here means “directive,” and is used in this meaning at many instances in the Qur’ān. It is evident from the style adopted here that the Qur’ān has presented this directive as an established directive given by all religions and prophets of God. Thus it is known that in the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms obedience to the parents is mentioned as subservient to obedience to God. The right which parents have on their children is granted to them by God. Thus they do not have the right to stop people from fulfilling the rights of God and when the parents – who have the greatest right after God – do not have this right, then how can this be imagined for any other person. Thus the law in Islam is: *لَا طَاعَةَ فِي الْمَعْصِيَةِ*

7. And We directed man to treat his parents kindly. And if they force you to associate something with Me of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. To Me will all of you return. So, whatever you have been doing I will inform you of it.





(no one can be obeyed if he calls to disobey the Almighty).⁸

The words مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ are actually meant to refute polytheism. This argument has been mentioned in the Qur’ān in various styles. The word عِلْمٌ here means “argument” and “proof.” As far as one God is concerned, it is an obvious reality that even a polytheist acknowledges nevertheless. As far as His associates are concerned, it is the responsibility of those who regard them to be His associates to present a proof for this. In the absence of any such proof, it is not permissible to any reasonable person to become their servant by regarding them to be God’s partners.

The words اِلَّا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاَنْتَبِهُوا contain both assurance and warning. The implication is that everyone must return to God and none other than Him. He will then inform them of their deeds. This obviously means that He will reward or punish them in accordance with their deeds. In other words, He will inform people who today are persecuting His servants of their misdeeds and will reward those who will persevere for His cause for their sacrifices.

وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾

The previous verse had a strong ring of warning in it. This verse has a strong ring of glad tidings in it. The expression اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحٰتِ is in its complete meaning and refers to people who in spite of all the enmity from their enemies adhere to faith and are diligent in doing pious deeds will be regarded by God among the righteous. The righteous are a category of sincere and pure people who the Almighty is choosing for His eternal kingdom by making them pass through various trials. Not every one who lays claim to it can become part of it. Only those will be regarded its part who will pass in the trials they endure.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ فَاِذَا اُذِي فِي اللّٰهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَلٰكِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ كَيَقُولُنَّ اِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ ۚ اَوْ كَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُوْرِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

This is a mention of people who claimed to have accepted faith but when

8. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 1229-1230, (no. 7145).

9. And those who have professed faith and did righteous deeds, We shall admit them into the group of the righteous.

10. And there are those among people who do claim that they have accepted faith but when they are afflicted with sorrow in the cause of God, they regard the sorrow inflicted on them by people to be similar to God’s punishment. And if in some matter God’s help manifests itself, they will say: “We are with you.” Is God not aware of whatever is in the hearts of people?

they were faced with difficulties in this cause, they became so apprehensive of the harms inflicted by people as if they were encountering God’s scourge. The fact is that whatever harm a person receives in this world is very short as compared to God’s torment which will eternally seize them. For this reason, it is easy to bear in this world the greatest of calamities for the cause of truth than being led away from the truth and face eternal punishment. In accordance with the established practice of God that is in currency in this world each person has to select one of the two paths: either he adopts the path of the truth and with full resolve fight out the hate in fact oppression of people; if he does not find this strength in him, then he should tread the path of evil and face eternal loss in the Hereafter. There is no other option than these two.

Here, it may be noted that the harm a person faces from people is called *فِتْنَةٌ* (trial). This is because such harms are no more than a form of trial. Yet whatever people will face in the Hereafter is called *عَذَابُ اللَّهِ* (God’s torment) because it will be a torment that they will not be able to escape.

The words *وَلَكِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ يُفَقِّهُنَّ إِنَّكُنَّ مَعَكُمْ* imply that at this time trials have really jolted them and they have joined the enemies of God in complaining of what has befallen them but when later the signs of God’s help appear they will emphatically say that they have presented many sacrifices for the cause of truth and remained second to none in this.

The words *اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ* imply that such a claim can only be of use before someone who is not aware of the secret of the hearts. But how can it succeed before someone who knows people inside out.

وَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

The implication of this verse is that when hypocrites are also found in the ranks of sincere Muslims, God will sincerely sift out the one from the other. The words *الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا* refer to sincere believers. This is because in contrast the hypocrites are mentioned. Their character is portrayed in the earlier verse as those who had laid claim to faith but were not ready to face any difficulties in its cause.

The emphasis found in the verse shows that sifting out the sincere believers from the hypocrites is an essential requisite of God’s attributes. If He does not do this, it will be against His justice.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلَ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَمَاهُمْ بِخَالِدِينَ مِنْ خَطِيئَتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُمْ

11. And God will make distinct the believers and also make distinct the hypocrites.

لَكِنْ يُوْنُ ﴿١٧﴾ وَيَحْمِلْنَ اَثْقَالَهُمْ وَاَثْقَالًا مَّعَ اَثْقَالِهِمْ وَيُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتُرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾¹²

Though the words اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا are general, yet occasion and context show that they relate to those disbelievers whose children or other subservient individuals had accepted Islam. In order to turn them away from Islam, they would persecute them and also morally pressurize them by saying that they are more aware of their good and evil. So, they would contend that if these subservient individuals keep following their ways, they will be responsible for the consequences. They will be absolved of any responsibility. This logic has always been used in the past by elders, guardians, fathers, teachers, pundits and leaders for their young ones and is still used today. At times, it is very effective as well. To a certain extent, it quite naturally influences minds and there is no harm in it at all as well. However, the matter of religion is very important. The Almighty has made each person individually answerable for it. Blind following in this matter is not allowed nor is it permissible to force people to blindly follow someone. None will be able to bear the burden of another person before God. The Qur’ān has explicitly stated: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ اُخْرٰى (no soul shall bear the burden of another, (39:7)).

In the verse under discussion, it is pointed out that the elders who are reassuring their young ones that they will bear their burdens are under a grave misconception and wrongly assuring the younger ones. On the Day of Judgement, such will be the situation of these people that they will be bearing the burden of their sins and will also bear the responsibility of leading others astray.

The words عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتُرُوْنَ refer to the religious innovations which they invented themselves but ascribed them to God. Such is their extremism that they compel others to adopt them and claim that they will bear the consequences. These words state that these people will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement for all these sins.

Section II: Verses (14-40)

Three things are mentioned in the previous verses:

Firstly, those who take up the cause of God do not reach their destination without any hindrance or barriers. They have to pass through many trials in this way. Without passing through them, no one can be regarded as sincere

12. And the disbelievers say to the believers: “Follow our ways; We will bear the burden of your sins. Whereas they will not bear any of their sins. They are absolute liars. And they will bear the burden of their own sins and some other burdens as well also besides their own sins. And they will be asked about the falsehoods they are concocting.

and truthful in the sight of the Almighty.

Secondly, in matters of religion, each person is accountable himself before God. No other person will bear his burden. Thus no one should rely on the excuse that he had gone astray in a particular matter because he was morally or materially pressurized by another person.

Thirdly, people who subject those who tread the path of truth to various oppressions in order to turn them away from religion are given respite from God till a certain time. However, if this respite increases their rebelliousness, they face God's law and when this happens they are not able to escape in any way.

In the succeeding verses, the facts stated above are delineated through the accounts of the prophets of God and their enemies and rejecters. Readers may proceed to study the verses.



وَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾
فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ۖ
ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَبْلُغُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهٗ ۚ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾
وَإِنْ تَكْذِبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ۖ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ النَّبِيُّ ﴿٣٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ
اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ
يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ
تُقْلَبُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ۚ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَكُونُونَ رَحِمَتِي وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ
قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ فَأَنْجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا
اتَّخَذْتُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ ۚ وَيَلْعَنُ
بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ نَّصِيرِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَأَمَنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ ۖ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ ۚ وَاتَّيْنَاهُ أَجْرًا فِي
الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُم لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا
مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ أَيْبَكُم لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقَاطِعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ۚ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ
جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اتُّبِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ
الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَىٰ قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُوا أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ ۚ إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانَوْا



ظَلِيلِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ إِنْ فِيهَا لُوطًا قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِبَنِي فِيهَا لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَكَهَذَا أَنْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيقًا بِهِمْ وَصَاقَ بِهِمْ ذُرْعًا وَقَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّا مُنْجُوكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾ إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَى أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّبَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَرْكَبُهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يَقُومِرُ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْبَثُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جُثَيَيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَّسْكِنِهِمْ ۚ وَرَبِّكَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْبَاهُمْ فَصَدَّاهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَى بِآلِ يَسِينَ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوا سَاقِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذُنْبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَسَفْنَاهُ الْإَرْضَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَعْرَفْنَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

And We sent forth Noah to his people; so he dwelt among them for fifty short of one thousand years. Then a storm struck them and they were ones who were unjust to their own selves. Thus We delivered him and all those who were in the ark, and made this event a great sign for mankind. (14-15)

And We also sent forth Abraham as a messenger when he said to his people: "Worship God and fear Him. This is better for you if you but know. You are only worshipping idols besides God and fabricating falsehood. Those whom you worship besides God do not have any power to provide sustenance to you; so, only ask God for sustenance and worship and remain grateful to Him alone. You will be returned to Him alone. (16-17)

And if you deny, then remember many nations before you denied as well and the only responsibility of the messenger is to clearly communicate to you. (18)

Have they not observed how God begins creation and then re-creates? Indeed, this is very easy for God. Tell them: "Roam about in the earth and observe how God began creation and then will recreate again. Indeed, God has power over all things. He will punish whomsoever He wills and show mercy on whomsoever He wills and to Him shall you be returned. And neither will you escape from His grasp on the earth nor is there anyone who can protect or help you in the skies except Him. And those who denied God's revelations and meeting Him, it is they who will be deprived of My mercy. It is for these people that there is a painful torment." (19-23)

So, the only answer his people gave was: "Kill him or burn him." Then God delivered him from the punishment of the fire. Indeed, there are many signs in this for those who accept faith. (24)

And he said: "The idols you have made besides God, your mutual friendship with them is only till this world. Then on the Day of Judgement

each one of you will deny and curse the other and Hell shall be your abode and none shall be your helper. (25)

Thus Lot attested to him and said: “I migrate towards my Lord. Indeed, He is powerful and wise.” (26)

And We gave him Isaac and Jacob and began the succession of the book and prophethood in his progeny. And We gave him his reward in this world and in the Hereafter also he will be among the righteous. (27)

And We made Lot a Messenger also when he said to his people: “You commit an open vulgar act which no nation before you ever committed. Do you lust after men and violate the path of nature. And perpetrate shameful acts in your gatherings.” Then the only answer his people gave was that they said: “If you are truthful, bring on us the torment of God.” (28-29)

He prayed: “O Lord! Help me against this mischievous nation.” And when Our messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings, they said: “We are about to destroy the people of this settlement. Its inhabitants are very wicked.” He said: “Lot is also among it.” They replied: “We very well know who are in it. We will save him and his kinsfolk except his wife. She will be among those left behind.” (30-32)

And when it happened that Our messengers came to Lot, he became sorrowful and distressed because of them and they said: “Neither fear anything nor grieve. We will save you and your kinsfolk except your wife. She will be among those left behind. We will be bringing down a calamity from the heavens on the inhabitants of this settlement because of their disobedience.” And We left intact a very clear sign of this for those who want to understand. (33-35)

And to the people of Madyan, We sent their brother Shu‘ayb. So, he invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God and await the Last Day and do not move in the land as mischief-mongers.” Then they rejected him; so, an earthquake seized them. Thus, they remained lying face-down in their houses. (36-37)

And We destroyed the ‘Ād and the Thamūd as well. And evident to you are the signs of their settlements. And Satan made their foul deeds seem fair to them and in this way stopped them from the right path, even though they were a very clever people. (38)

And We killed Korah, the Pharaoh, and Hamān. And Moses came to them with veritable signs, but they showed arrogance in the land. And they could not escape Our power. (39)

Thus We seized each of them because of their sins. To some We sent a violent storm; and some of them were seized by thunder and some We thrust into the earth and some We drowned. And God was not unjust to them; they were the ones who actually were unjust to themselves. (40)



Explanation

13 ﴿وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ﴾

Only this *sūrah* mentions that Noah (sws) lived for 950 years. It is actually the central theme of the *sūrah* which entailed this mention. It is mentioned earlier that those who adopt the path of truth must not expect a smooth sailing to their destination. They shall in fact have to face trials for a long period of time. It is to delineate this fact that the age of Noah (sws) is cited. He had to deal with his nation for a very long period of time. It was only then that he succeeded in the trial of God and fulfilled the responsibility imposed on him.

The age of Noah (sws) mentioned here is exactly in accordance with the Torah:

After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died. (Genesis, 9:28-29)

It is evident from the Torah that in those days the average age of human beings was much more than today. Noah's (sws) father was 773 years old while his grandfather was 969 years old. Similarly, among his other forefathers one was 960 years and another was 895. It is evident from this that Noah's age was exactly in accordance with the average age of those times. There is no extant compiled history of those times. It is only through the Torah that we come to know of some information and there is no reason to deny this information. It may also be kept in mind that in those times when the earth was being populated and the evils of society and financial undertakings – which are now found in every sphere of life – had not come into existence it should not be any matter of amazement if the average age of human beings was so much. It is in fact directly in accordance with the requisites of God's wisdom and human nature.

The words *فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ* corroborate what has been said in the earlier part of the *sūrah*: God does give respite to the enemies of the truth but this respite is to a certain extent. After this, He definitely seizes them. And this punishment is not any act of injustice from God. They themselves are unjust to themselves because the truth had been conclusively delivered to them. According to the established practice of God, just as the proponents of the truth have to pass through trials before they succeed similarly the proponents

13. And We sent forth Noah to his people; so he dwelt among them for fifty short of thousand years. Then a storm struck them and they were ones who were unjust to their own selves.

of falsehood are conclusively communicated the truth before they are punished.

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَبَ السَّفِينَةَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

The implication of this verse is that after such a long struggle and period of trial came the phase in which God delivered Noah (sws) and his followers and made this incident a great sign for all mankind. The proponents of both truth and falsehood can see in its reflection the fates they will meet.

The antecedent of the pronoun in وَجَعَلْنَاهَا is not any specific word but the whole incident mentioned earlier. This is a very common usage of pronouns in Arabic. Examples can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*.

Found in this account of Noah (sws) is the proof of what is stated earlier: no one will be answerable for the deeds of another person. Had there been any possibility of this, Noah (sws) would certainly have saved his son from God’s punishment. So, if such a grand prophet of God as Noah (sws) was unable to do this, how can others even think of it?

وَأَبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ۖ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

The implication is that just as God sent Noah (sws) to his nation as a messenger, similarly He also sent Abraham (sws) to his nation as a messenger. He also invited his people to worship God and fear His wrath. The word اتَّقُوهُ means fear God ie. do not invite His wrath by associating partners with Him in worshipping Him. The words ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ sound a warning. It is the best advice and counsel which is being delivered to them in time so that they understand it and give importance to it.

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَبْلُغُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَاتَّبِعُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۚ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

The verse states that the deities which these people are worshipping are

14. Thus We delivered him and all those who were in the ark, and made this event a great sign for mankind.

15. And We also sent forth Abraham as a messenger when he said to his people: “Worship God and fear Him. This is better for you if you but know.

16. You are only worshipping idols besides God and fabricating falsehood. Those whom you worship besides God do not have any power to provide sustenance to you; so only ask God for sustenance and worship and remain grateful to Him alone. You will be returned to Him alone.





baseless. They are merely idols and shrines. The words **وَتَخْلُقُونَ أَفْئَكًا** state that their claim that God has included them in His divinity is a false allegation. Neither has God said anywhere that He has regarded these deities to be His associates nor do these people have any proof in its favour.

The words **إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ** say that if these people think that their deities also grant livelihood and sustenance, it is merely their wrong notion. Everything is in the power of God alone. So if they need livelihood and sustenance, they must turn to God and ask Him.

The words **وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ** imply that it is God Who is actually worthy of their gratitude. Everything is in His power. And by associating partners with the being Who grants everything, they should not show ingratitude to Him.

The words **إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ** imply that after denying, people will be raised up and meet God. On that day, their idols and deities will be of no use to them.

وَأِنْ تَكْذِبُوا فَعَذَابُكُمْ أَمٌّ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَدُ الْبَيِّنُ 17

This is a very stern warning. If these people did not believe in Abraham (sws) and remained adamant in their denial, they should remember that many nations before them denied their messengers and they will meet the same fate these nations met.

The words **وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَدُ الْبَيِّنُ** imply that the only responsibility of the Messenger is to clearly communicate the words of God. Abraham (sws) has fulfilled this responsibility. It is not the responsibility of his people. They will be held accountable and not he if they do not adopt the path of guidance.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ 18

Verses 19 to 23 are an insertion from God in between Abraham's invitation to his nation. Numerous examples of such insertions can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. When Abraham (sws) mentioned the Hereafter before them, the Almighty furnished arguments in favour of the Hereafter in order to complete the discourse and bring it in accordance with the situation of those times.

The words **أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ** imply that if these people have any doubt, then have they not observed how the Almighty brings things into existence in this world and then annihilates them and then creates them again.

This argument is the same which has been mentioned in this exegesis at

17. And if you deny, then remember many nations before you denied as well and he only responsibility of the messenger is to clearly communicate to you.

18. Have they not observed how God begins creation and then re-creates? Indeed, this is very easy for God.

various instances in various styles. The implication is that when it is of no bother to God to transform a dry and desolate piece of land into lush green territory, how could it be difficult for Him to recreate mankind once they die and become dust?

The words **إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ** imply that people should not regard this to be an improbable happening. It is very easy for the God Who created everything from nothingness and who is persistently making us observe His power to create mankind again.

19 **قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ** ﴿١٩﴾

This is an invitation to reflect on this universe with the right frame of mind. God is running the system of this world in such a manner that to be educated on these facts, this world in itself is a complete workshop. There is no need to find any external proof of monotheism, hereafter and reward and punishment. These proofs can be found from within the cycle of this world. The verse states that people should roam around in this earth and see how God creates something and then destroys it only to recreate it again. He brings a nation into being and then destroys it and brings a new one in its place. The day appears after the night and the spring after autumn. God is making human beings observe all this so that they do not regard their recreation to be a far-fetched possibility. On the contrary, on the basis of this daily observation, they should have conviction that nothing is difficult for the God whose majesties they are witnessing everyday. Everything is within His power and reach.

20 **يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُونَ** ﴿٢٠﴾

The implication of this verse is that it becomes evident from a study of the events and history of this world that it is God Who punishes whomsoever He wishes or has mercy on whomsoever He wishes. Nothing except His own justice and wisdom impacts His power and intent. The history of nations cited by the Qur’ān is an irrefutable proof of this fact. And it follows from this that in the Hereafter too reward and punishment will be entirely in His hands. No other person will be able to interfere with this authority. In accordance with His justice and wisdom, He will punish whomsoever He wants to and pardon whomsoever He intends.

19. Tell them: roam about in the earth and observe how God began creation and then will recreate again. Indeed, God has power over all things.

20. He will punish whomsoever He wills and show mercy on whomsoever He wills and to Him shall you be returned.



It is evident from the words **وَإِلَيْهِ تُغْلَبُونَ** that all human beings will finally return to God. No other has the position to become a person to whom people will return. When no one was able to save people in this world from His grasp and no one's pleadings could succeed in this regard, then how can someone be regarded as a saviour for them.

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٢١﴾

The above conversation was in an indirect form. Now in this verse, the Quraysh are directly addressed and admonished so that the discourse relates to the situation of those times. It is stated that when God wants to seize people, they will not be able to escape from Him neither in this earth nor in the heavens. Neither will they have any guardian or protector in this world nor will they have any supporter or intercessor in the Hereafter.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَكُونُونَ مِنْ رَحْمَتِي وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

The word **يَكُونُونَ** here means **حَرَمُوا** and **يَعْدُونَ**. In other words, these people will be eternally deprived of God's mercy and favours. This word has more stress than **حَرَمُوا**. At times, being deprived of something is accompanied with the hope of regaining it. In such cases, this deprivation is not that discouraging. However, in the Hereafter, the deprivation of the disbelievers from God's mercy will be with eternal hopelessness. The doors of hope will forever close upon them.

The verse states that people who denied the revelations of God today being read out to them and the meeting with God are eternally deprived from God's mercy. They can only become worthy of it if they avail its opportunity in this world. Those who waste this opportunity will never get a chance to avail it.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ فَأَنْجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

The insertion (*taḍmīn*) ended on the previous verse. Now the remaining portion of the real anecdote resumes. It is stated that the response to the compassionate way in which Abraham (sws) delivered his message to his

21. And neither will you escape from His grasp on the earth nor is there anyone who can protect or help you in the skies except Him.

22. And those who denied God's revelations and meeting Him, it is they who will be deprived of My mercy. It is for these people that there is a painful torment.

23. So, the only answer his people gave was: "Kill him or burn him." Then God delivered him from the punishment of the fire. Indeed, there are many signs in this for those who accept faith.

people was that they asked for his slaying or burning. Finally, they agreed on the second of these options. It is mentioned at another place in the Qur’ān that a secret plan was devised for this but the Almighty saved Abraham (sws) from his enemies. It is stated that there are many signs in this anecdote for those who choose the path of faith.

The first sign in it is that those who tread the path of faith should bear in mind that they will be faced with very severe trials. Unless they pass through them, no person can fulfill the requisites of faith. A prophet as mighty as Abraham (sws) had to pass through the trial of fire.

The second sign in it is that in this path there is no importance of fraternal ties. Āzar, who was Abraham’s (sws) father fully pressurized him to stop him from accepting faith. However, Abraham (sws) fully knew that in matters of religion his father will not be answerable for his deeds. He will be answerable himself. Thus in spite of his immense concern and compassion for his father, he broke the chains of all ties of love for the cause of religion and prepared himself for an onslaught.

The third sign in this is that those people who use all their power, control and authority to defeat the truth are given a certain reprieve by the Almighty because this is essential for His law of trial, but this time has a certain limit. If the adherents of the truth unite to face them they succeed and the adherents of evil are disgraced both in this world and the Hereafter.

وَقَالَ إِنَّا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن تَصْرِيحٍ²⁴

The word **إِنَّا** is meant to limit and restrict and the words **مَوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ** do not express the cause; they rather are meant to describe the situation. The implication is that the deities and idols these people subscribe to other than God are baseless. They are mere figments of their imagination. Their friendship and adoration with them will be confined to this world. When on the Day of Judgement the actual reality will appear both parties will deny and curse one another. They will call out to God and say that such and such led them astray; had they not led them astray they would still have been on the right path. The answer they will receive from those whom they followed will be that the latter only beguiled them into their own ways; they were wretched enough to follow them and so now instead of blaming them they should

24. And he said: “The idols you have made besides God, your mutual friendship with them is only till this world. Then on the Day of Judgement each one of you will deny and curse the other and Hell shall be your abode and none shall be your helper.





blame only themselves and bear the punishment of their misdeeds. This heated argument between the two groups is mentioned at many places in the Qur’ān. The purpose of this mention was to inform the masses of the period of the prophetic mission that if their leaders were trying to comfort them by saying that on the Day of Judgment they will answer on their behalf, then this is a totally baseless claim. On that Day, such leaders and their followers, such deities and their worshippers will curse one another. Their claims of friendship and loyalty will be confined to the period when the veil is not lifted from the actual reality. As soon as this happens, it will become evident to everyone that the abode of all such people is Hell. None of them will be able to mutually help one another.

فَأَمَّنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٥﴾

The words فَأَمَّنَ لَهُ are meant for ratification and attestation. Lot (sws) was a nephew of Abraham (sws) and like him a messenger of God and deputed to guide his people. The attitude adopted by the people of Abraham (sws) has been mentioned in the previous verses. Here the attestation of Lot (sws) is alluded to in order to highlight that there came a time even on Abraham (sws), an illustrious messenger of God in which the only person to profess faith in him was Lot (sws). However, a day came when then the calls of his message reverberated in every nook and corner of the world. The words إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ are spoken by Abraham (sws). The implication is that when he saw that his people were after killing and burning him, then as per the established practice enunciated by God, he decided to migrate from his people to the path of God because He is mighty and wise. In other words, what he meant was that even though the circumstances are totally adverse, His Lord has power over everything and every act of His is based on wisdom. He will open the way for him through His might and wisdom and make light appear from the darkness that prevails.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَكَبِيرٌ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

This verse depicts the favours God bestowed on Abraham (sws) after

25. Thus Lot attested to him and said: “I migrate towards my Lord. Indeed, He is powerful and wise.”

26. And We gave him Isaac and Jacob and began the succession of the book and prophethood in his progeny. And We gave him his reward in this world and in the Hereafter also he will be among the righteous.

migration. It is said that though only Lot (sws) was with him during this time, God does not abandon those who migrate for His cause. He provides them with the noble company of the pious and righteous both in this world and in the Hereafter. Thus God gave Abraham (sws) such a son and grandson as Isaac (sws) and Joseph (sws) respectively. From them sprung a great clan of those who served the cause of religion. The Almighty raised many prophets from this clan and also bestowed His book on them. In other words, Abraham (sws) was rewarded for his endeavours in this world, and in the Hereafter too he will be regarded among the righteous.

There are glad tidings concealed in this verse. It has been alluded to earlier that this *sūrah* was revealed at a time when the disbelievers were persecuting Muslims and the oppressed Muslims had no option left but migrating from that place. In these circumstances, the Almighty assured Muslims by revealing the details of Abraham's (sws) migration. Muslims should not feel intimidated if they have to migrate. They should boldly take this initiative much like their forefather Abraham (sws) by trusting their mighty and wise God. If they leave their people for God, then He will provide them with companions both in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَلَوْ طَا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

It is mentioned earlier that Lot (sws) was a nephew of Abraham (sws). Though the places to which both were sent were different, yet the time period was the same. The people of Lot (sws) were afflicted with all the sins which idolatrous nations usually are; however, the vulgar practice of sodomy assumed the status of fashion in their society. For this reason, Lot (sws) had to pay special attention to this aspect. He has used the word *فَاحِشَةٌ* to refer to this very vulgar practice. The word *فَاحِشَةٌ* refers to such acts and practices about whose vulgarity and lewdness there cannot be two opinions. By using the words *لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ*, Lot (sws) has tried to rouse the moral sense found in them. At the same time, he has tried to appeal to their honour by saying that it is they who for the first time on the face of this earth are guilty of making this vulgarity into fashion of their society. Before them, no people adopted this disgusting practice as their national culture.

I have explained at another instance in this exegesis that the words *مَا سَبَقَكُمْ* *بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ* do not necessarily mean that not a single person before the people of Lot was guilty of this sin. The word *أحد* also occurs to connote plurality. Examples of this usage have been presented earlier. For this reason,

27. And We made Lot a Messenger also when he said to his people: "You commit an open vulgar act which no nation before you ever committed."



its precise meaning would be: no nation before them was engaged in this sin in their collective capacity. It is this aspect of the sin that made the whole nation of Lot (sws) worthy of punishment.

أَيْنَكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ۚ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيَكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا
اٰتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٨﴾

The word سَبِيل means the “path of nature.” Lot (sws) very affectionately rebuked his people for deviating from the course of nature. These wretched people seek to sexually satisfy themselves from men and depart from the course of nature. It is obvious that if this ailment becomes rampant in a society men will totally lose their inclination towards women, and if some of it even remains it will not be in its right form. In this way, the whole nation will fail to procreate and produce any progeny. This of course is against the scheme of the Creator and a doomed path.

The words تَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيَكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ point to the pervasive nature of this moral corruption: it was not something that was concealed in the society; it had assumed the status of fashion and culture in their society. Gatherings would witness these lewd acts openly. Their tales would be proudly and amorously narrated in them. The poetry which has been condemned as worse than human filth by the famous Urdu poet of the Indian sub-continent, Altāf Husayn Ḥālī (d. 1914) would eulogize this ailment. History bears witness to the influence this has cast on our national character and conduct.

The words اٰتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ imply that the only response given to these affectionate and kind warnings given by Lot (sws) was that if he was a true messenger of God and if as a result of his denial a divine scourge would visit them, then they were prepared to face it. They will believe only when they see this scourge.

قَالَ رَبِّ اَنْصُرْنِيْ عَلٰى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِدِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾

When Lot (sws) lost all hope in his people because of their attitude, he pleaded before the Almighty that all his efforts have gone a begging and that he needed God’s help against these people who were bent upon spreading disorder.

28. Do you lust after men and violate the path of nature. And perpetrate shameful acts in your gatherings.” Then the only answer his people gave was that they said: “If you are truthful, bring on us the torment of God.”

29. He prayed: “O Lord! Help me against this mischievous nation.”

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَىٰ قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُوا أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ ۚ إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

The word بُشْرَى refers to the glad tidings which God gave Abraham (sws). It has been mentioned earlier in verse 27. The verse states that the very angels who had come to Abraham (sws) to give him glad tidings of a son and a grandson brought the lash of punishment for the people of Lot (sws). Besides giving these glad tidings to Abraham (sws), they also informed him that they have sent to destroy the inhabitants of the city of Lot (sws). There is an allusion in this that the hand of God holds both mercy and revenge. Just as He makes a single downpour of rain beneficial for one piece of land and destructive for another in a similar manner the same angels who came to deliver grand tidings to Abraham (sws) were instrumental in bringing punishment to the people of Lot (sws). This also negates a notion of idolatrous nations they espoused upon seeing opposite and conflicting elements of nature: they regarded good and evil to have separate deities and started to worship them.

The words إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ state the reason for the destruction of Lot's people: it is because of their own injustice to themselves by blatantly deviating from the path of nature; moreover, when God's messenger informed them of its consequences, then instead of paying heed to him they asked him to show the punishment he was threatening them with. The torment which visits such people is caused by their own injustice. God is never unjust to them.

قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيهَا ۚ لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ ۚ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

As soon as Abraham (sws) came to know of the agenda of the angels regarding Lot's nation, he became worried. He asked the angels about the fate of Lot (sws). The angels assured him they are fully aware of all the believers in that city; they will be protected from the punishment; only his wife who will stay behind will suffer the punishment.

وَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيقَهُمْ وَصَاقِي بِهِمْ دُرْعًا وَقَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ ۚ إِنَّا مُنَجِّوكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ ۚ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Here a special linguistic principle alluded to by Ibn Qayyim should be kept

30. And when Our messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings, they said: "We are about to destroy the people of this settlement. Its inhabitants are very wicked."

31. He said: "Lot is also among it." They replied: "We very well know who are in it. We will save him and his kinsfolk except his wife. She will be among those left behind."

32. And when it happened that Our messengers came to Lot, he became sorrowful and distressed because of them and they said: "Neither fear anything nor grieve. We will save you and your kinsfolk except your wife. She will be among those left behind."



in mind: when the word **أَنَّ** is juxtaposed between **لَئِنْ** and the verb after it, the relationship between a condition (*shart*) and its responsive clause (*jawāb shart*) is that of the cause (*sabab*) and what is caused (*musabbab*).

The implication is that when the angels after meeting Abraham (sws) came to Lot (sws), the latter became sad and hesitant. Here the question may arise: why did Lot (sws) become sad and hesitant? Why did he not heartily welcome them the way Abraham (sws) did? It is evident from other instances in the Qur’ān that there were two reasons for this behaviour of this and they manifested themselves in two separate phases.

In the first phase, he became worried to see them because the angels had come in the form of handsome boys. This was indeed a final trial for the people of Lot (sws) so that whatever evil they have in them manifests itself fully and they become worthy of the punishment that has been destined for them in the ultimate sense. Since this fact was not evident to Lot (sws), so when he saw some handsome boys at his doorstep, he became very worried thinking that this day will prove very tough for him. This is because when the ruffians of the city see them, they will pounce on them and will humiliate him and his guests. Thus his fear manifested as a truth. As soon as those ruffians came to know of the guests they leapt to Lot’s house and tried to humiliate them. Lot’s (sws) earnest pleadings before them could bear no fruit. At last, the angels exposed themselves and assured Lot (sws) that they were not youthful boys as these blind people think; they are in fact angels of God and have brought for them a decisive punishment. This breaking news comforted Lot (sws) that his guests will remain protected from the evil designs of the ruffians but at the same time the news of the punishment made him very hesitant and worried regarding his own fate and that of his near ones. The angels also assured him that he should not be worried about himself and his near ones for they will save them from this calamity. However, his wife will not be able to go unscathed. She will be punished together with Lot’s (sws) nation.

Here the fate of Lot’s (sws) wife is referred to twice. The purpose is to highlight the fact stated earlier that in matters of religion no one will bear the burden of another person. Whether man or woman, each will bear his or her own burden. Though Lot’s (sws) wife was the wife of a great prophet of God but since she herself was evil she was inflicted with punishment and her relationship with him was of no avail to her.

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

After giving glad tidings of deliverance to Lot (sws), the angels also

33. We will be bringing down a calamity from the heavens on the inhabitants of his settlement because of their disobedience.”

informed him of God’s verdict in accordance with which they will be bringing divine punishment on the inhabitants of the city. The word رَجْرُ refers to a torment that causes shudders in the hearts of the onlookers. It is qualified by the words مِنَ السَّيِّئِ in order to express its intensity and profundity. It is like saying God’s scourge or divine punishment in the English language. Arabic is no different. I have explained the nature of this scourge at appropriate instances in this exegesis. It is evident from the words بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ that the Almighty sends such a scourge to a nation when rebelliousness and defiance become its second nature.

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

This city of the people of Lot (sws) was situated along a trade route of the Quraysh. For this reason, the manifestation of this established practice of God was a very clear sign for them to which the Qur’ān was alluding to. However, these silent signs are beneficial for those who use their intellect. For those who do not use their intellect, they see everything yet they cannot see anything. Even today there are so many archeologists who are able to decipher ancient ruins but their intellect has become incapable of grasping the moral message these ruins convey.

وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْتَوُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جِثِيَّةً ﴿٣٦﴾

The accounts of nations referred to earlier are mentioned in detail. However, the forthcoming ones are rather concise. The purpose is to state in the light of history what is said at the beginning of the sūrah in verse 4 by the words: أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (are those people who are committing wrongs think that they will escape Our grasp. If this is what they think then they are making a very bad decision). The subsequent historical events have been mentioned to corroborate that the wrongdoers should not be misled by the respite which the Almighty gives them that they will not be seized or that they are beyond God’s control. In this regard, among nations, the ‘Ād and the people of Shu‘ayb are referred to while among insolent and

34. And We left intact a very clear sign of this for those who want to understand.

35. And to the people of Madyan, We sent their brother Shu‘ayb. So, he invited them: “O People of My Nation! Worship God and await the Last Day and do not move in the land as mischief-mongers.” Then they rejected him; so, an earthquake seized them. Thus, they remained lying face-down in their houses.



rebellious persons, Qārūn, the Pharaoh and Hāmān are alluded to. In their background, the Quraysh are warned that the power and authority possessed by these people was much more than what they and their leaders have today. Yet when these people showed rebelliousness and in spite of God's warnings did not desist, they were seized by Him and seized in such a way that none of their power and might could be of any avail to them.

It is evident from earlier details that the people of Shu‘ayb (sws) they had made great development matters of trade. The Quraysh too were also basically a people given to trading. However, as yet they had not become as advanced in this regard as that of the nation of Shu‘ayb (sws). It is perhaps because of this similarity that the Quraysh are directed foremost to their fate. It is stated that the Quraysh should seek a lesson from the circumstances of the people of Madyan towards whom God sent Shu‘ayb (sws) as His messenger. He invited them to worship God and warned them of the consequences in the Hereafter if they spread disorder and anarchy in the land. They should, on the contrary, be advocates of reform and proponents of truth and justice. However, they did not the slightest paid heed to Shu‘ayb's call. As a consequence, God seized them in their period of advancement and such was the nature of the torment that visited them that they were left lying face down in their houses. Verses 85 and 94 respectively of Sūrah Hūd mention the disorder they spread in the land and the torment that came upon them.

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَّسْكِنِهِمْ³⁶ وَزَيْنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْبَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ

Here a verb to the effect اَحْذَنَّا is suppressed. The implied meaning would be: "Earlier We also seized the ‘Ād and the Thamūd in punishment." The cultural and social development of these nations especially in the fields of construction and building reached great heights and has been alluded to in the previous *sūrahs*. The words وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَّسْكِنِهِمْ direct the attention of the Quraysh that like the nation of Lot (sws) the signs of these nations are also not hidden from them; they pass through their ruins during their trade journeys and can well estimate the splendour they must have had in the past; yet now none but these ruins recount the their tale.

The words وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ imply that that these nations were very skilful and adept in various fields especially construction and also very expert in

36. And We destroyed the ‘Ād and the Thamūd as well. And evident to you are the signs of their settlements. And Satan made their foul deeds seem fair to them and in this way stopped them from the right path, even though they were a very clever people.

governance. However, these proficiencies could not save them from the lures of Satan. He made their worldly engagements seem so dear to them that they became oblivious of God and the Hereafter. The consequence of this was that they went far astray from the straight path and were ultimately ruined. It is evident from this that a nation's advancement in science and constructional feats is not evidence of its adherence to the truth path, as is understood by people lacking insight. It only bears witness to the fact that only one of its eyes is open from which it sees the world; however, if the other eye which sees beyond the apparent happenings of this world is not open, then in spite of all this Satan can lure it into such devastation that it is not able to come out of it.

وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوا سَابِقِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

These names are also governed by a suppressed verb that has been indicated in the previous verse. After mentioning nations, some prominent arrogant people are stated: Qārūn, the Pharaoh and Hāmān. All the three have been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs*. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, I have stated that Qārūn occupied a very similar status in the nation of Moses (sws) to the one occupied by Abū Lahab in the Prophet's nation. For this reason, this is not a mere reference to some personalities of the past; the Quraysh are, in fact, shown a mirror, in which their leaders can very easily recognize their own faces.

The verse states that Moses (sws) showed great signs to these people but such was their arrogance that these signs could do nothing to open their eyes until God's scourge overtook them. The words وَمَا كَانُوا سَابِقِينَ refer to the fact mentioned in verse 3 of this *sūrah* ie. when these people were seized by God they could not escape His grasp in spite of their power, splendour and might.

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذُنُوبِهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا ۖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ ۖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ ۖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَغْرَقْنَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

This verse summarizes the fate of all the afore-mentioned nations and personalities. Each of them was seized by the Almighty. To some He sent a

37. And We killed Korah, the Pharaoh, and Hamān. And Moses came to them with veritable signs, but they showed arrogance in the land. And they could not escape Our power.

38. Thus We seized each of them because of their sins. To some We sent a violent storm; and some of them were seized by thunder and some We thrust into the earth and some We drowned. And God was not unjust to them; they were the ones who actually were unjust to themselves.



stone hurling wind (*ḥāṣib*), to others He sent the scourge of thunder and lightning; similarly, He had others thrust in the earth and still others He had them drowned.

The details of these punishments are mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*:

- The nation of Lot (sws) was destroyed by a stone hurling wind.
- The nations of ‘Ād, Thamūd and Madyan were decimated by lightning and thunder.

- Qārūn was thrust in the ground.

- The Pharaoh and Hāmān were drowned.

The words *وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ* indicate that whatever happened to these nations and people was no injustice from God; they in fact were unjust to their own selves. The Almighty had fully informed them of the consequences but they paid no heed to His messengers.

Section III: Verses (41-69)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The following aspects are clarified in them:

The house constructed by the polytheists on the foundation of polytheism has no basis. It is like the web of a spider. If they desire to fight the truth through it, then they have sought help from a very weak support. This support is neither going to help them in this world nor in the Hereafter.

The believers should rest assured that the Almighty has created this world with a purpose. It is not meant for the amusement of its creator. Hence, the justice of God shall definitely manifest itself one day. The believers should wait patiently for it. In the meantime, they should remain engaged in spreading their religion and be diligent in the prayer because it protects people from the prayer and there is great force in remembering God.

Muslims are directed about the People of the Book: if they start to engage in debate with them alongside the Idolaters, then they should ignore the miscreants among them; however, they should debate with their saner elements in a goodly way. They should invite them on the basis of the common grounds both agree to. In this regard, certain arguments that validate the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) are referred to and some demands of the opponents are rebutted.

Muslims who were persecuted by the disbelievers are urged to migrate and glad tidings are given to the immigrants of the help and support they will receive from God in this world and in the Hereafter.

In the end, the polytheists of the Quraysh are warned in a very stern

manner. They are told that all their vicious propaganda against the Qur’ān is against the established principles they themselves acknowledge. They are very ungrateful and mean people. The favours they enjoy are given to them by God but they attribute them to others and make them God’s associates. Soon they shall observe the fate of their ingratitude. On the other hand, those who are putting their lives in danger to make the word of God dominant will be facilitated by Him.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses ahead.



مَثَلِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ ۖ اتَّخَذَتْ بِعَيْنٍ ۖ وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ ۖ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ لَضَرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۖ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ **أَنْتُمْ مَا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۚ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَذَكِّرْهُ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَالْهَمَّا وَالْهَمُّ وَاحِدٌ ۚ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ أُنْزِلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۖ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَقُولُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّ بِبَيْمِينِكَ إِذَا لَا تَأْتِي الْبُطْلُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ بَلْ هُوَ آيَةٌ بَيِّنَةٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ ۖ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُثْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرًا لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ بَيِّنَةً وَبَيِّنَتُكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۖ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ۖ وَلَوْلَا أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۖ وَلَيَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْةٌ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَسَاحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ ۖ وَيَقُولُ دُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ يُعْبَادُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ أَرْضٌ وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٨٣﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَاقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُؤْتِيَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَافًا تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ لَا تَحْمِلُ رَقْعًا ۖ اللَّهُ يَرِزُّهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَهُوَ السَّابِقُ ۖ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَلَكِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَلَكِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ**

مَنْ نَزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا يَفْقَهُونَ ۚ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ ۚ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِیَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الدَّيْرِ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ ۖ وَ لِيَسْتَسْتَعِزُّوا ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا مِمَّا آمِنًا وَنُحَاطَةً لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِالْعَبَثِ اللَّهُ يُكْفِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَّٰءَ الْفُحْشِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

The example of those who regard others besides God as their guardians is that of a spider which built a dwelling. Surely the frailest of dwellings is the dwelling of the spider. Would that they knew this fact! Indeed, God fully knows those they invoke besides Him and He is Mighty and Wise. And We state these examples for people to reflect; but only men of knowledge understand them. (41-43)

God has created the heavens and the earth with a rightful purpose. Indeed, there is a great sign in this for the believers. Read the Book that is being revealed to you and be diligent in offering the prayer. Indeed, the prayer fends off lewdness and immorality. And the remembrance of God is a great thing. And God knows whatever you do. (44-45)

And debate with the People of the Book in a goodly manner only except for the unjust among them and say: "We professed faith in that which was revealed to us and in that also which was revealed to you and your and our God is the same and we are obedient to Him alone." (46)

And in a similar way, We have also revealed a Book to you; so, to those whom We have given the Book will profess faith in it, and some of them are also professing faith in it. And only those deny Our revelations who are fanatic disbelievers. And before this, you neither read a Book nor wrote it with your hands. Had this been the case, these rejecters would have created doubts. In fact, these are clear revelations in the chests of those who have been given knowledge. And only those are denying Our revelations who are unjust to their own selves. (47-49)

And they say: "Why were signs from his Lord not sent down to him?" Say: "Signs are with God. And I am only an open warner." Is this not sufficient for them that We revealed a Book to you and it is being read out to them. Indeed, there is mercy and a reminder in it for those who profess faith. Say: "Sufficient is God as a witness between you and me. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and those who professed faith in evil and who rejected God, they are the real losers. (50-52)

And these people want to hasten the torment from you. And had a time



period not been fixed for them, the torment would have landed on them. And it will come upon them suddenly and they would not even be aware of it. And they want you to hasten the punishment even though Hell has encircled the disbelievers. They should remember the day when the torment will cover them from above and from below their feet and it will be said: “Taste the flavour of what you have been doing.” (53-55)

O My People who have professed faith, indeed vast is my earth. So, Worship Me. Every soul has to taste death. Then you shall be returned to Us. And those who professed faith and did righteous deeds, We shall lodge them in the high mansions of Paradise. Below it rivers will be flowing and they will live in it forever. What a grand reward for those who labour who were steadfast and trusted their Lord in all circumstances. And there are so many animals that do not carry their sustenance. It is God who gives them sustenance and to you also. He hears and knows. (56-60)

And if you ask them: “Who has created the heavens and the earth and who has put the sun and moon into subservience?” They will reply: “God.” So, where do they lose their senses? It is God Who enhances the sustenance of whomsoever He wills of His people and constricts it of whomsoever He wants. Indeed, God knows everything. And if you ask them: “Who sent down water from the heavens; then enlivened the earth from it after it had died,” they will reply: “God.” Say: “It is God only Who deserves gratitude.” In fact, most of them do not use their intellect. (61-63)

And the life of this world is only sport and entertainment. And it is the abode of the Hereafter which is the real abode of life, if they knew. (64).

Thus when they embark on the ship, they call God in sincere obedience. Yet when He delivers them to the land, they start associating partners with Him so that they show ingratitude to the favour We have blessed them with and so that they benefit from life a little more. Then they will soon know. (65-66)

Have they not seen that We have made for them a protected sanctuary and such is the situation that people are abducted from their whereabouts. So, do they profess faith in belief in evil and are ungrateful to God’s favours! And who can be more unjust than the person who ascribes falsehood to God or denies the truth when it has come to them. Will not the abode of such disbelievers be Hell? (67-68)

And they who are bearing adversities for Our cause, We will definitely open out ways to them. And indeed God is with those who are thorough. (69)

Explanation

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ ۖ إِتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا ۖ وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ



الْعَنْكَبُوتُ كَوْكَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

It has been established from historical events mentioned earlier that no one can save people from God's grasp. The supports which the polytheists relied on besides God were shown to be false. And just as they have been proven false in this world, they will also be proven false in the Hereafter. God's law of reward and punishment and His impartial justice is bound to manifest itself. It will become evident to those who rely on the intercession of their alleged deities and regarded this support to be impregnable was it no more than a cobweb in nature. A parable is cited in this verse to convey this fact: the example of those who seek support of other than God is that of a spider who regards her cobweb to be very firm and solid yet hers is the frailest and most fragile of abodes. It cannot even bear the force of a gust of wind. The words كَوْكَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ imply that though attention has been directed to the real fact yet its benefit can only be reaped if these people understand it. Alas! These naïve people do not have this ability.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٠﴾

The verse implies that no one should regard the above mentioned parable regarding the deities of the polytheists to be based on exaggerated humiliation. This is not humiliation but an expression of reality. The Almighty is fully aware of the truth behind these deities. The sarcasm and derision mentioned in “fully aware” is known to every person has a flair for language. This style is common in most languages.

The sentence وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ implies that what use will these deities be against God Who is الْعَزِيزُ and الْحَكِيمُ. The former means that He is mighty and inaccessible and the latter means that all His works are based on wisdom. Obviously, when God is mighty, then how can someone however high his status may can dominate Him; similarly, when God is wise, then no one can abort His law of retribution. In other words, if these deities can neither dictate Him nor influence His justice, then what good are they and why then do these naïve people worship them in such a situation? It may be kept in mind that these polytheists were of the view that their deities have great influence on God and thus will save all those who worship them whatever their deeds may be.

39. The example of those who regard others besides God as their guardians is that of a spider which built a dwelling. Surely the frailest of dwellings is the dwelling of the spider. Would that they knew this fact!

40. Indeed, God fully knows those they invoke besides Him and He is Mighty and Wise.

This belief negates the concept of God being mighty and wise. For this reason, by reminding them of both these attributes, God has negated this belief.

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ لَضَرِبِهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

The word *أَمْثَالُ* refers to the parables and events mentioned above. God says that the examples He has mentioned are not meant to narrate tales; they are presented so that people can reflect and derive a lesson from them. When an example is presented before someone, the purpose is to show him his past and future. However, not every one can derive a lesson for himself from the example of others. Only those people do this who have insight and understanding. Here the word *الْعَالِمُونَ* refers to people whose natural abilities are alive. Such people derive a message from every incident that gradually increases their knowledge. On other hand, those who do not have the ability of learning and drawing lessons do not in the first place pay heed to such incidents because they can awake them from their slumber. And if they do make such an effort then it is not to draw a lesson from them and only regard them as past events.

It is evident from this that real knowledgeable people are not those who have read a lot of books but rather those who reflect on the signs found in the world outside them and those within them and draw lessons from these signs.

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

The implication of this verse is that he who reflects on the system of the heavens and the earth, it will become evident to him that neither has this world come into being without a creator nor is it the place of entertainment or battle ground of various gods; on the other hand, it has been created by a knowledgeable and a wise and a powerful being for a purpose. In fact, this world by its very existence bears witness that a day will come when this purpose will become evident before everyone. On that day, the perfect justice of its creator will manifest itself and evil will be totally annihilated. People who lead their lives in vain considering this world to be a place of entertainment will meet the consequence of this heedless behaviour. However, those who will lead heedful lives will be entitled to the eternal pleasure of the Creator. Readers may take a look at what I have written while

41. And We state these examples for people to reflect; but only men of knowledge understand them.

42. God has created the heavens and the earth with a rightful purpose. Indeed, there is a great sign in this for the believers.





explaining verse 190 of Sūrah Āl-i ‘Imrān.

The word *إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ* in *آيَةً* is for magnification. In the words, it refers to a great sign. Various aspects of this sign have been explained at various instances of this exegesis. For this reason, here I will just briefly refer to them.

The greatest sign is that of the manifestation of a Day of Judgment. This world bears witness through its very existence that its Creator is a wise being. For this reason, it is essential that He bring about a Day in which His complete justice manifest itself. If this does not happen, then this would mean that this world is a place of amusement, and this is totally against the majesty of the great creator whose power, wisdom and presence is evident from every nook and corner of this universe.

The second sign in this is that a successful life with regard to its consequence is only that which is spent while keeping the Hereafter as the real objective. This is because it is there that the decision about eternal success and eternal failure will be made. This world is incomplete without the Hereafter. It shall stand completed with the arrival of the Hereafter when its real purpose will manifest itself. This entails that the good and evil of each thing be decided while keeping in view their consequences in the Hereafter. It may happen, in fact, it has happened that those who tread the path of the truth face great adversities but it is not justified to worriedly turn away from this path in the wake of these calamities. This is because these calamities augur well if their consequences are take into consideration.

The third sign is that the beliefs of polytheism and intercession are totally baseless. This is because these beliefs negate the fact that this universe has been created with a purpose. If the existence of such associates of God and intercessors is recognized who are able to turn a good into evil and vice versa through their influence, then this would mean that this universe is a meaningless and purposeless place.

This sentence of the verse will further be explained in verse 8 of Sūrah Rūm, the next *sūrah*. Here readers may content their selves with this concise mention.

أَتْلُ مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْبُكَرِ ۚ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

This verse gives assurance to the Prophet (sws) and to the Muslims. They

43. Read the Book that is being revealed to you and be diligent in offering the prayer. Indeed, the prayer fends off lewdness and immorality. And the remembrance of God is a great thing. And God knows whatever you do.

should recite out the Qur’ān to people and invite them through it. If the addressees do not pay heed to the signs and arguments the Qur’ān is presenting and instead demand miracles, then they should pay no heed to their demands. The Qur’ān is a great mercy to them. If they will not give it due regard, they themselves will bear the consequences.

The words *وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ* imply that the Prophet (sws) should be diligent and vigilant in the prayer and urge his followers to this as well. Emphasis on the prayer in this specific phase shows that besides the five general prayers, the *tahajjud* prayer is also implied. It was this prayer to which the Prophet (sws) and his followers were directed in order to acquire patience and steadfastness and which has been mentioned at many places of this exegesis.

The verse directs the Prophet (sws) to follow two directives: reciting out the revelation and being diligent in the prayer. The first of these relates to general preaching and the second relates to reforming their collective lives. It is evident from the style of the verse that as far as others are concerned, he need not pay attention to their every new demand; he should only communicate to people what is being revealed to him – whether they give it importance or not. His real responsibility is to deliver it. Beyond this, he has no obligation. As for those who have accepted faith, he should make diligent arrangements for the prayer for their education and instruction. This will cleanse them from the evils which were responsible for the destruction of the previous nations, and this will also create in them the strength and determination which will enable them to bear the responsibilities of a sound society in spite of difficulties and adversities.

Here two effects of the prayer are mentioned: first, it stops people from *al-fahshā’* (الْفَحْشَاءُ) and *al-munkar* (الْمُنْكَرِ) (إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ) and second it is God’s remembrance and God’s remembrance is a great thing (وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ). Both these effects need some explanation.

The words *الْفَحْشَاءُ* and *الْمُنْكَرِ* comprehensively encompass all aspects of moral misconduct. Many evils spring from unbalanced or deviant sexual urges and then slowly turn the whole society into such shameless individuals that they become devoid of the sense of modesty and sexual propriety. As an example of the past nations, the Qur’ān has referred to the nation of Lot (sws). He used the word *الْفَحْشَاءُ* for the sexual impropriety of his nation. In current times, new forms of sexual impropriety and lewdness have come into being with the help of modern philosophical trends and culture. This process is incessant, and such is their extent that the sexual impropriety and deviation of Lot (sws) seem very minor before it. Those who are aware of current circumstances know that our society has been totally gripped by them and





slowly the conscience of people is dying away in their matter. A very major section of our society which unfortunately also is its intellectual cream does not even regard such things to be lewd. On the contrary, they regard them to be a requisite of culture and advancement, and those who criticize such things are regarded by them as foolish and old-fashioned.

Another type of evil is one which emanates from unchecked greed and extreme love for wealth and status. The word *munkar* is used to comprehensively cover them. This word is the opposite of *ma‘rūf* and thus includes all evils which are against the sound traditions of a healthy society and its universally accepted norms. From among the previous nations, the Qur’ān has mentioned the social misconduct of the nations of ‘Ād and the Thamūd and the economic misconduct of the nation of Shu‘ayb (sws). In current times, it would not be wrong to say that the extent to which this social and economic misconduct has enveloped every sphere of life stands unparalleled.

Here, readers should content themselves with these brief explanations about *ma‘rūf* and *munkar*. In verses 31-40 of Sūrah Rūm and verse 17 of Sūrah Luqmān, they will be discussed in much more detail.

The implication of the prayer stopping people from evils means is that it is a very effective chider and admonisher. Those who offer the prayer – whether in seclusion or in public – while giving due regard to its spirit and requisites are continued to be reminded by it of the facts that are essential to remain on the right path. In particular, the prayer offered in seclusion is the most effective for the life a person. If a person does not offer the prayer, then his example is that of a driver who is driving his vehicle at full speed, yet he is absolutely heedless and unaware of the sign-boards at the road side that tell him of the right way and also inform him of various dangers. Such a driver in all probability will lead his vehicle into a ditch.

It should be kept in mind that the effects of the prayer mentioned here are of that prayer which is offered with true sincerity and attention. If a prayer is devoid of these effects, it means that it is either devoid of sincerity or devoid of attention. In other words, a person has either offered a prayer to put up a show or he is totally unaware of what he has said in the prayer and what commitments positive or negative he has made in it.

The words *وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ* allude to a second aspect of the prayer and conceal in them a whole world of meanings. The implication is that when at this instance in order to engender strength and determination, Muslims are being urged to adhere to the prayer, they should not regard it to be something ordinary or just a trivial assurance. They should not remain in the wrong notion that how can the prayer be effective in producing strength and discipline in them. In reality,

God’s remembrance is a great thing. It is through it that hearts receive true assurance and comfort: (:) (Listen up! Hearts receive assurance from God’s remembrance, (13:28)). And it is a person’s heart which is the source of strength and determination in him. If the heart is strong, there is nothing more powerful than a human being and if the heart is weak, there is nothing more frail than a human being. The real thing that energizes the heart is God’s remembrance and the most comprehensive form of it is the prayer.

It should be kept in mind that the assurance and comfort of the heart referred to here that produces that strength and determination in a person which makes him disregard every fear and greed other than that of God. It is this real chivalry and valour which is attained through faith and God’s remembrance. This valour is totally different from the gallantry which springs from hopelessness, revenge, fear, heedlessness or fame. Those who are not aware of the difference between gallantry and valour regard the valour of a believer and the gallantry of a disbeliever to be the same. The fact is that the psychological motives of both are different and the effects of both also assume different forms in this world. The source of one is God’s remembrance and that of the other is some motive from among various psychological motives that we have alluded to earlier. For this reason, the valour of one brings the blessings of God to this world the way it was brought by the valour of ‘Umar (rta) and Khālid (rta). On the other hand, the valour of the other brings to this world the evil and disorder similar to the one worked by Mussolini, Hitler and their likes.

The words *وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ* sound an assurance to the Muslims: God is observing the efforts they are putting into their own moral training as well as that of others. So when He is aware of these efforts, they should trust Him that He will not let these efforts come to nothing whether they are carried out in the seclusion of the night or in the openness of the day. They will be fully rewarded for them.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that in the previous part of the verse the address was in the singular tense, while it is in the plural in this part. This is an indication of the fact that the first part was addressed to the Prophet (sws) as the representative of the Muslims. In reality, that address too was for the whole *ummah*. This is because just as the Prophet (sws) was responsible for preaching and instruction, so were the rest of the Muslims. However, the address in the singular shows that the Prophet (sws) has to carry it out whether others do it or not. If they do it, they will be rewarded for an effort and if they do not, they will not in any way harm God and His prophet; they will only be a source of their own deprivation.

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۖ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا



أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَالْهَآءُ إِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

The phase of preaching under discussion in this *sūrah* is one in which the People of the Book too had taken up opposition against Muslims. Hence, just as in the previous verse the methodology of invitation was described for those who demanded miracles to accept the call of the Qur’ān, in a similar way these few verses explain the methodology of debate Muslims should adopt in the case of the People of the Book. The succeeding verses will show this significance of the People of the Book: their religious status was totally different from the idolaters of Arabia and their doubts and objections were also of a slightly different nature. They were extremely well read giants. Hence it was necessary that important directives be given beforehand to the Muslims to deal with them.

The verse states that if debate and discussion arises with the People of the Book, then Muslims should do it in a befitting manner. The word مجادلة here is in its positive meaning of “debate, argument and discussion.” The sound (احسن) way referred to by the verse is explained in the succeeding part of the verse: starting with common points and values of religion. By making them the foundation, Muslims should ask them to acknowledge these values and their requisites and should not negate what they themselves believe in. This way of debate will not hurt their ego. The upright among them will reflect on what is being presented to them and it may well be that some of them even accept these.

The clause *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ* has generally been understood to mean that this sound way is not needed to be followed in the case of the evil and mischievous elements on the People of the Book. They should be responded to in a tit for tat manner. However, in my opinion, this is a severed exception (*istithnā’ munqatā’*). Hence, the correct meaning would be that those among them who are mischievous, they should not even be spoken to. Parallel verses of the Qur’ān also endorse this meaning. At many instances in the Qur’ān, the Prophet (sws) has been asked to ignore stubborn and warped arguers as well as those who engage in hair-splitting discussion. In *Sūrah Kahf*, it is expressly stated that that the obdurate who do not even want to understand should not be paid attention to in the first place; and if the situation of discussion arises with them, then conversation should be to defer and avoid debate (مراء ظاهرا).

Prophets of God and the righteous have always stuck to this methodology of

44. And debate with the People of the Book in a goodly manner only except for the unjust among them and say: “We professed faith in that which was revealed to us and in that also which was revealed to you and your and our God is the same and we are obedient to Him alone.”

discussion and preaching and there are much benefits and blessings in it. Following the methodology of mischievous people when faced with them and answering their harshness with more venom is neither the way of the prophets of God nor is there any benefit in it.

The words وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَتَخُكُّ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ explain this methodology and way of preaching: inviting them on basis of the commonalities in religion is the right way. Muslims should tell them that they believe in the book revealed to the Muslims and in the one revealed to them. The Book Muslims believe in does not reject their Book. It in facts corroborates it. The predictions of the last prophet and the perfect book that were mentioned in their Book needed to be fulfilled. The Book revealed to the Muslims is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Muslims believe in all the prophets and books before them. If the People of the Book also adopt the right way, then instead of showing aversion to this messenger, they should welcome him. This is because his advent has actually elevated them since it is they who have recounted the glad tidings of his arrival before the world. If out of obduracy they reject him, they will actually be rejecting their scriptures even though their scriptures are being ratified by the Muslims.

In a similar way, Muslims should also invite the People of the Book to the belief of monotheism and tell them that their God is the same. There is no dispute between them in this matter. The Torah and the Gospel and all other scriptures are replete with the belief of monotheism. The only difference between Muslims and the People of the Book is that the former have left what is against this established reality and consigned themselves to God, while the latter do lay claim to monotheism and at the same time accept views which are in absolute contradiction to it. Muslims should tell the People of the Book that just as they have consigned themselves to God, they too should do away with this contradiction and consign themselves to God.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۖ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

The words وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ refer to the fact that in accordance with the principle of preaching referred to earlier, the Almighty has revealed the Book to them. This Book does not claim that all what it states is being revealed in it for the first time; on the contrary, it claims that all prophets and messengers

45. And in a similar way, We have also revealed a Book to you; so, to those whom We have given the Book will profess faith in it, and some of them are also professing faith in it. And only those deny Our revelations who are fanatic disbelievers.





of God have called people to the same religion as this Book is inviting them to; the previous nations either forgot these teachings revealed by God or changed them according to their whims and desires and in this manner the religion of God became totally distorted. Now the Almighty has once again revealed His religion in its true form in this Book and through this messenger so that people are not deprived of God's guidance.

Consider next the words: **فَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ يَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْكُفْرِ**. It has been explained earlier at many instances of this exegesis wherever the Qur'ān has mentioned the People of the Book using an active verb as is this case here, then it refers to the righteous among them. Hence the words **يَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْكُفْرِ** do not refer to common People of the Book but to those among them who still adhere to the Torah and the Gospel to the best of their knowledge. About them, the Qur'ān has given the glad tidings to the Muslims that if they present this Book before them the way they are being directed to, then the righteous among them will believe in it.

In the clause **وَمَنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ**, the words **يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ** are in the meaning of state (*hāl*). It is said that there are some people from this group who are professing faith and others who have the ability to accept the truth will profess faith in the future.

The words **وَمَا يَجْعَلُ أَلْيَتِنَا إِلَّا الْكُفْرَ** state that only those people will deny the revelations of God who are disbelievers i.e. who neither believe in the their own books and messengers nor are prepared to believe in anything in future.

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكُمْ إِذَا لَأَزْتَابُ الضُّبُطُونَ ⁴⁶

This verse directs the attention of the People of the Book that if they do not let stubbornness and ego come in their way, then it is sufficient evidence for them regarding the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) that he has neither read any of the previous scriptures nor is he conversant with the art of writing. When such is his state of affairs, how did he become aware of the knowledge as a result of which he not only revived the teachings of the previous prophets but also filled any gaps that remained in them. This argument in support of Muḥammad's prophethood is for everyone in general but in particular for the People of the Book because they were the inheritors of the *sharī'ah* and wisdom of the previous prophets. They should have thought that how come all the treasures of wisdom revealed from prophets Noah (sws) to Abraham (sws) and from Moses (sws) to Jesus (sws) revealed to an unlettered prophet.

The words **وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكُمْ إِذَا لَأَزْتَابُ الضُّبُطُونَ** imply that had the Prophet (sws) being conversant

46. And before this, you neither read a Book not wrote it with your hands. Had this been the case, these rejecters would have created doubts.

with reading and writing, these people would have fabricated some nonsensical premise to doubt his prophethood. In the present case, they have nothing to say, but if they created doubts, then it is their wretchedness.

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

The implication of this verse is that those among the People of the Book who have true knowledge of religion, in their hearts this Qur’ān is present in the form of very clear signs: they consider everything it says to be the call of their own hearts. For them, it is a known thing that they awaited. Because of the prophecies of their prophets they were fully awaiting it. Now that they have received it, they think that they have received their prized and dear possession. The sentiments of the true People of the Book about the Qur’ān and the last messenger are mentioned in the Qur’ān in unequivocal terms. It is evident from them how eagerly they awaited the last messenger and how enthusiastically they welcomed him. In this verse too, this fact is rather concisely referred to.

The words *وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ* state precisely what is mentioned earlier in verse 47. In other words, only those people reject the verses of the Qur’ān whose hearts have lost the ability to accept the truth because they have shown indifference to the knowledge revealed to them by God. In this way, they are ones who have been unjust to their own selves. The word *الظَّالِمُونَ* here refers to the same wretched people who are alluded to by the words *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا* in verse 46 and about which Muslims have been told to not expect anything from them because they are totally incorrigible.

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٤٨﴾

This verse cites an objection of the People of the Book and then answers it. However, the style of the answer has a strong ring of indifference to it. So much so, they are not even directly addressed. On the contrary, the Prophet (sws) is addressed and it is through him that they are conveyed these words. In the early period, the general objection the People of the Book raised against Muhammad (sws) that if he is God’s prophet, then why was he not given miracles the way they were given to the Israelite prophets, in particular

47. In fact, these are clear revelations in the chests of those who have been given knowledge. And only those are denying Our revelations who are unjust to their own selves.

48. And they say: “Why were signs from his Lord not sent down to him?” Say: “Signs are with God. And I am only an open warner.”





to Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). They would raise this objection to entice the Quraysh too. The leaders of the Quraysh would ask them that since they are well aware of the traits and characteristics of prophethood, what their opinion was about this new claimant to prophethood. In response, they would very innocently reply that the only thing that they fail to understand is that if he is God's prophet then why was he not given miracles the way they were given to previous prophets. Since this answer of the People of the Book would strongly endorse the stance of the Quraysh, so the latter would spread this answer far and wide and try to sow seeds of disinformation about Muḥammad (sws) in the minds of the others. In this verse, the Qur'ān has answered this objection implanted in the minds of the Quraysh by the People of the Book and while answering it has kept the former more in consideration than the latter because it was the Quraysh who would be harmed the most by these objections as they would be deprived of God's greatest mercy by becoming targets of the jealousy of those who were jealous from them.

The words قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ state the first answer to this objection: signs and miracles relate to God; the Prophet (sws) has no say in this regard. If God wants, He will show a sign and if not, then no sign will be shown. The Prophet (sws) is merely a clear warner who has been directed to fully inform them of the imminent dangers, and he is only carrying out this obligation. All other matters rest in the hands of God. He has claimed to be a prophet and not God that he should show them miracles as per their demand.

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُشْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنْ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرْحْمَةٌ وَذِكْرَىٰ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

This is the second answer and is a very comprehensive one. It is said that it is not sufficient proof for them that the Almighty has revealed a Book to him which is being read out to them. The implication is when a whole Book is being recited to them which is a proof to its own claim and the person who recites it out to them is also present, then in the presence of this great sign what need remains of any other sign.

The words إِنْ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرْحْمَةٌ وَذِكْرَىٰ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ imply that it is a great blessing of God that instead of a miracle or a sign of torment, He has revealed His Book to them. A palpable miracle would have however been only a temporary thing and a sign of torment would have been a calamity and could have manifested in any form. It is a great blessing of God that He has revealed a Book to them which is for them an abiding mercy and reminder on the condition that they give it due value by professing faith in it. The word ذِكْرَىٰ has been explained at

49. Is this not sufficient for them that We revealed a Book to you and it is being read out to them. Indeed, there is mercy and a reminder in it for those who profess faith.

another instance in this exegesis: in reality, the Qur’ān reminds mankind of the forgotten facts that are present in their intellect and nature. No external sign or miracle is needed to prove the veracity of the Qur’ān. The only thing needed is that people in its light evaluate the treasure found in their own nature. If they do this, they will cry out that whatever the Qur’ān is saying is true.

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ بَيِّنًا وَبَيِّنَاتٍ شَهِيدًا ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ ۚ
أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

The implication of this verse is that the objections and doubts that are being raised by these people are just lame excuses; in reality, their hearts bear witness that Muḥammad (sws) is God’s messenger and every word that he is telling them is true. So, there is not much need to argue with such people. He should consign their matter to God and should tell them that God’s witness is sufficient between him and them that whether they have rejected him because his veracity has as yet not become evident to them or whether they have deliberately rejected him to keep intact their leadership. God is aware of all the secrets of the heavens and the earth and will reveal them on the Day of Judgement. However, they should remember that those who intentionally profess faith in evil and deny God are the ones who will be the real losers in the Hereafter.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ۚ وَلَوْلَا أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۚ وَلَيَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

Among the signs demanded as mentioned above, the Quraysh were keen to be hurriedly shown the sign of torment. When the Prophet (sws) warned them of torment if they denied the Qur’ān, it would strike their ego and struck with consternation they – in order to pester the Prophet (sws) – would ask him to bring the torment he was threatening them with if he was really truthful in his claim. The verse states that a time has been fixed by the Almighty for the punishment and it does not come before its time. Were not this an established practice of the Almighty, the punishment would have descended on them. The implication is that if in spite of the haste being shown by them, there is a delay in the punishment, then it is not because any concession is being shown

50. Say: “Sufficient is God as a witness between you and me. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and those who professed faith in evil and who rejected God, they are the real losers.

51. And these people want to hasten the torment from you. And had a time period not been fixed for them, the torment would have landed on them. And it will come upon them suddenly and they would not even be aware of it.



to them nor is it because of any lack of preparation or power. It is because of the law of God which He has set Himself. I have explained this law at an appropriate place of this exegesis that the Almighty has fixed the time period of destruction of a nation keeping in view the extent of its moral decadence. Only He knows when the time given to a nation will expire. No one else has this knowledge. The verse states that when the time of punishment arrives, they will not be able to save themselves from it.

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَكُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَعْلَمُونَ
أَرْجُلُهُمْ وَيَقُولُ دُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۚ

This verse repeats their haste in demanding punishment. Apparently, there was no need for this. However, this repetition is to express amazement. The implication is that these people are very arrogantly making repeated demands for punishment as if the punishment is far off from them whereas the punishment has embraced them from above and from below. They are surrounded by God's Hell. The deeds in which they are deeply engrossed in will become their firewood of Hell. In other words, the source and means of the punishment which they are hastily demanding is being provided by them. These misdeeds will one day convert into punishment and engulf them from above and below and at that time they will be asked to taste what they were hastening. The implication is that their ordained punishment does not need to be hastened. It is not something that needs to be externally summoned. They have made it part and parcel of their lives. This is their mere naivety that by regarding it to be far away they want to hasten its arrival.

لِعبَادِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٣﴾

This verse addresses the oppressed Muslims that are under discussion since the beginning of the *sūrah*. The style of address is very affectionate. The verse states that the servants of God for whom the city of Makkah has become impossible to live in should not give up God's worship while being overcome by despair and hopelessness; they should adhere to their covenant. If they are forced to leave Makkah, then they should rest assured that God's earth is very vast. Some other city will welcome them. The words فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ emphasize

52. And they want you to hasten the punishment even though Hell has encircled the disbelievers. They should remember the day when the torment will cover them from above and from below their feet and it will be said: "Taste the flavour of what you have been doing."

53. O My People who have professed faith, indeed vast is my earth. So, Worship Me.

that come what may they should strongly adhere to God’s worship and not bear the humiliation of worshipping someone else. If they leave their homes for the sake of God, then they should know that God is responsible for them and that He has everything in abundance.

Some points become very evident from this verse:

Firstly, migration from a place becomes mandatory for a person only when he is persecuted because of his religion.

Secondly, in times of persecution, a person should diligently adhere to God’s worship and in no way tolerate the humiliation of worshipping someone other than God.

Thirdly, if he has to migrate from his place and leave his house and belongings in order to save his faith, then he should do so while leaving everything aside. God will take care of him.

54 كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

Though this verse can be interpreted to imply both warning and assurance, the context points at the latter interpretation. In other words, this life is temporary. One day everyone has to die and return to God alone. So, why should a person feel ashamed before his Lord because of this fleeting life? Why should he not forsake this world for his Lord?

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُؤْتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نِعَمَ أَرْجُوا الْعَمِلِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

The verse implies that no deed of a person will be left unrewarded from God. Those who profess faith and do righteous deeds will be housed by God in high mansions where they will live forever. The implication is that when in exchange of the faith and deeds done in this transient life they can gain an abiding reward, then this indeed is a great achievement. Every sane person should strive for this and not sacrifice it for even the greatest luxuries of this life.

56 الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

The first part of this verse is an attribute of the word عَمِلِينَ and as a result

54. Every soul has to taste death. Then you shall be returned to Us.

55. And those who professed faith and did righteous deeds, We shall lodge them in the high mansions of Paradise. Below it rivers will be flowing and they will live in it forever. What a grand reward for those who labour.

56. Who were steadfast and trusted their Lord in all circumstances.





the discourse becomes related to the circumstances of those times. The implication is that the reward mentioned in the previous verse is for these high achievers who remain steadfast in all circumstances and trust their Lord. It should be kept in mind that it is trust in God which keeps a person attached to His worship in all circumstances. If this trust does not exist a person cannot bear the most trivial of trials let alone migration and *jihād*.

وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ دَآئِبَةٍ لَا تَحْبِلُ رِزْقَهَا ۗ اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٥٧﴾

This verse implies that just as God's earth is very vast, His sustenance is also extensive. If a person has to leave his wealth and assets for the cause of God, he should do so without any hesitation. He should not think how he will sustain himself in future. He should just observe that there are so many living beings on earth who do not directly acquire their sustenance. It is their Lord who provides it to them. And He not only provides them, He will also provide that person who leaves his home for the cause of God. He hears and knows all and for this reason He listens to the pleadings of everyone and knows their needs as well. There is no possibility of the fact that if people call Him, He will remain unaware of this or if they are in need, He will remain unaware of this.

It is this wisdom which Jesus (sws) has explained in the following words:

You cannot serve both God and money. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. "Therefore do not

57. And there are so many animals that do not carry their sustenance. It is God who gives them sustenance and to you also. He hears and knows.

be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew, 6:24-34)

It is the inimitability of Qur’ānic eloquence that just it needed just one sentence to state the wisdom for which Jesus (sws) needed several sentences.

وَكَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لِيُقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ ۖ فَآلَى يُؤْفِكُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

This verse and the succeeding ones furnish reasons as to why none else but God is worthy of being worshipped and trusted. This is in the wake of the teaching of trusting Him and living and dying for Him enshrined in the previous verse. Such is the established nature of this truth that even those people cannot deny it who associate so many partners with Him and worship them. If they too are asked that who has put the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon in subservience, their reply will be God. After acknowledging this obvious fact, it is strange that they wander away from the truth by acknowledging other deities and worshipping them too. It has been stated at various instances in this exegesis that the idolaters of Arabia did not regard any of their deities to be the creator of the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon. They regarded only God to be their creator. However, at the same time, they were afflicted with the notion that the beings they worshipped were very dear to God and can influence God in accepting whatever they want. The words *فَآلَى يُؤْفِكُونَ* express amazement at this contradiction: when they regard God to be the creator of everything, what is the reason for them to regard others to be their guardians and worshipping them and pleading before them and asking for their mercy?

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾

This verse implies that when God is the creator of the heavens and the earth and it is He Who has put the sun and the moon in the service of mankind, then how is it possible that someone else becomes the owner of the treasures of sustenance? It is but logical to assume that it is only He Who provides abundantly to whomsoever He wills from among His creatures and restrict it for others. He has knowledge of everything and distributes His sustenance in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom. No one else has more

58. And if you ask them: “Who has created the heavens and the earth and who has put the sun and moon into subservience?” They will reply: “God.” So, where do they lose their senses?

59. It is God Who enhances the sustenance of whomsoever He wills of His people and constricts it of whomsoever He wants. Indeed, God knows everything.



knowledge than God that he may inform God that such and such a person has received sustenance and such and such a person has not. Similarly, no one else except God is more informed of the circumstances of His creatures so that that person advises Him about the quantity of sustenance to His creatures.

وَلَيِّنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا يَكْفُلُونَ ۚ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

Similarly, if these people are asked about who sends down water from the heavens and with it enlivens the earth with lush green foliage after it has become dry and barren. Their reply will be the same. They should then be told that if they acknowledge this, then only God is a being worthy of gratitude; so, on what basis do they regard others to have the right of worship besides Him.

The idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the controllers of the clouds and rain but in spite of this they would ascribe sustenance to others and worship them. In this way, they were afflicted with a severe type of contradiction. If these favours have been given to them by God, then He alone deserves gratitude and it is this gratitude which is the foremost reason for worship and obedience. I have explained this aspect in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah.

The words *بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ* imply that though this contradiction is of such a dreadful nature but their majority does not think about it.

وَمَا لَهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ ۚ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِیَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

This is a reference to the real reason of their going astray from the right path: the attractions of this mortal world have lured them to such an extent that they are not able to think of anything else than its charms and benefits. In reality, this life which has enticed them and whose infatuation has made them blind is no more than a few days of sport and entertainment. The real life is the life of the Hereafter; yet they are heedless of it. The life of this world becomes worthwhile when it is led by making the Hereafter the real objective. In such a case, a person can gain an eternal kingdom in exchange of this fleeting world. If this objective is forgotten, then this world is nothing but a few days of amusement and as a result a person ends up as an eternal loser. The verse points out this fact on the condition that the slaves of this

60. And if you ask them: “Who sent down water from the heavens; then enlivened the earth from it after it had died,” they will reply: “God.” Say: “It is God only Who deserves gratitude.” In fact, most of them do not use their intellect.

61. And the life of this world is only sport and entertainment. And it is the abode of the Hereafter which is the real abode of life, if they knew.

world want to know and understand it.

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَهُمْ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوا ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦﴾⁶²

This verse states that the example of the merry-makers of this world is that of the passengers of a ship. When the ship is happily sailing in favourable winds, they are so engrossed in it as if the clouds and rain are at their bidding. However, as soon as the ship gets caught in a stormy whirlpool they remember God and at that time while pledging sincere obedience to Him they pray to Him. But as soon as the ship comes out of the whirlpool they return to their life of indifference and deviation from truth and forget the promise they had made with God. The verse states that in this manner the God-given deliverance to them opens the way of ingratitude to God. On the other hand, God gives them reprieve that they are able to fully benefit from His favours. Ultimately, they will have to bear its consequences.

Some parts in this verse are suppressed. I have expressed them in the translation in the light of parallel verses. This motif is found in various styles in the previous sūrahs. Hence more details are not needed. In Sūrah Rūm, the words are:

وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا آتَاهُم مِّنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَهُمْ فَتَمْتَعُوا ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ (٣٤-٣٣)

And when people are inflicted with some calamity they call their Lord while turning to Him. Then when God makes them happy through His blessings, one group from them begins to associate partners with its Lord so as to show ingratitude to what We have bestowed on it. Then, reap pleasure for a few days. Soon you shall now. (31:33-34)

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا مَّا أُمِنَّا وَيَتَّخِطُّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾⁶³
The verse states that the situation of the ingrates of the Quraysh is not

62. Thus when they embark on the ship, they call God in sincere obedience. Yet when He delivers them to the land, they start associating partners with Him so that they show ingratitude to the favour We have blessed them with and so that they benefit from life a little more. Then they will soon know.

63. Have they not seen that We have made for them a protected sanctuary and such is the situation that people are abducted from their whereabouts. So, do they profess faith in belief in evil and are ungrateful to God's favours!





different. They do not reflect on this fact of their history that God had created for them a secure Ḥaram in which they were peacefully leading their lives whereas in their whereabouts people are kidnapped right in the light of the day. Lives and wealth of people are not safe and secure. Yet the value they gave to this great favour of God was that in every nook and corner of His Ḥaram they have placed idols and are worshipping them. The Prophet (sww) should ask these wretched people whether they believe in evil and are thankful to God's favours.

Deliberation shows that there is a great resemblance between the example of the ship cited in the previous verse and the actual situation depicted in this verse. This safe Ḥaram was like a secure ship for the Quraysh in which they were living in peace from every danger. This life of comfort made them indifferent to God even though had God willed, He would have cast them into the same life of danger and disruption as was the case with the people living in their whereabouts. Alas! Such is the situation of people that as long as their ship is sailing in favourable winds, they live in comfort and relief and think that they are now salvaged but if they are put to test again, they start complaining.

The leadership of the whole of Arabia which the Quraysh acquired because of the custodianship of the House of God as well as the opulence this position afforded them has been referred to at many places in this exegesis. Verse 57 of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ also discusses this.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ ۚ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

After the charge sheet of their crimes is read out to the Quraysh, the question mentioned in this verse is posed to them: who can be more unjust than the person who concocts lies about God or deny the truth when it has come to them. The words *افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ* (concocting lies about God) refer to the creed of polytheism and the word *حَقِّ* (truth) refers to the Qur'ān and the messenger. It is evident from the words *لَمَّا جَاءَهُ* that before the advent of the messenger they could have had an excuse before God but after its advent and also the revelation of the Qur'ān what is the excuse left for them? The words *أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ* mean: will not the abode of such die-hard disbelievers be Hell? The implication is that there is no doubt that such people will end up in Hell.

64. And who can be more unjust than the person who ascribes falsehood to God or denies the truth when it has come to them. Will not the abode of such disbelievers be Hell?

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Once the disbelievers are shown their ultimate fate, the discourse turns to the innocent Muslims which are under discussion since the beginning of the *sūrah*. The verse states that God’s servants who are bearing various difficulties for His cause will definitely be helped by Him. Occasion and context evidence that this promise implies that the religion they follow will also prosper, their worldly problems will get solved and in the Hereafter too the Almighty will guide them to the cherished path.

The words وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ sound glad tidings to these people of being in the company of their Lord and indeed they are supreme glad tidings. This is because those who are in the company of their Lord need nothing else and the greatest of assets are nothing before this favour. However, these glad tidings are qualified by the word. In other words, those people will have the honour of His company who befittingly fight against the adversities they encounter while treading the path of truth and who prove to be people who fully trust their Lord in every phase.

With the help of God, this brings us to the end of this *sūrah*’s exegesis. May God forgive our blemishes and create in us the acceptance of the truth. (and our last words are that gratitude be to God, Lord of the worlds).

10 am, Monday
27th May 1974 AD
Raḥmānābād

65. And they who are bearing adversities for Our cause, We will definitely open out ways to them. And indeed God is with those who are thorough.